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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000266

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF A/S JENDAYI FRAZER, AF/SPG, SE
WILLIAMSON, NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON, D (GDELGADO), PRM

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/24/2018
TAGS: [KPKO](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [UN](#) [AU](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: MFA CAUTIONED, "NEED TO ADVERT WEST DARFUR
HUMANITARIAN CRISIS NOW"

REF: A. KHARTOUM 251

[1](#)B. KHARTOUM 246

[1](#)C. KHARTOUM 219

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: CDA urged the Sudanese Foreign Ministry to take immediate action to prevent a burgeoning humanitarian crisis in West Darfur which is developing as a result of fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and JEM (Justice and Equality Movement) Darfur rebels supported by Chad. The MFA agreed to an urgent meeting with UNAMID JSR Adada to include military and security officials to create a humanitarian corridor for internally displaced persons fleeing the fighting in NW Darfur, allowing them to return home or other safe places and getting them out of the continuing military standoff between JEM and SAF in the Jebel Moon area. End summary.

THOUSANDS FLEE TO MOUNTAIN SIDE

[1](#)2. (C) CDA Fernandez met on February 24 with influential MFA Under-Secretary Mutriff Siddiq, a National Congress Party (NCP) insider whose portfolio includes UNAMID deployment. While the meeting had been previously scheduled to discuss the upcoming visit of Special Envoy Williamson, Charge used it to press the Sudanese Government to take urgent action to address the problem of thousands of civilians, mostly women and children, trapped in the Jebel Moon area of West Darfur in the midst of fierce fighting between the SAF and Chad-supported fighters of the JEM rebel movement. Fighting has included bombing and strafing by SAF Antonovs and MI-24 gunships. The current SAF offensive is a response to the JEM seizing the West Darfur towns of Sirba, Silea and Abu Siruj in late December/early January (a rebel attack which included cross-border Chadian air raids on Sudanese territory targeting Chadian rebel bases on Sudanese soil).

[1](#)3. (C) CDA noted that thousands have fled the fighting in terror, it is very cold at night on Jebel Moon and the possibility of loss of life is great if a humanitarian corridor is not opened up to get people out of the way of the fighting. The best solution is to allow at least a token force of UNAMID troops to take positions in Silea, allow NGOs into that area, and encourage the IDPs to return home (Silea is now peaceful and in GOS hands). There are currently small UNAMID detachments in Kulbus and Geneina, north and south, respectively, of the affected area and some of these could move down. Charge had already discussed this scenario with UN OCHA's Mike McDonough and UN DSRSG for Humanitarian Affairs Amira Haqq on February 23. CDA noted that this is an

opportunity for Sudan to "do the right thing" in West Darfur, something the US will be monitoring closely as the first visit of SE Williamson begins in Sudan.

14. (C) Siddiq agreed that something needs to be done immediately and was setting up a meeting with Adada, Haqq and Sudanese military and security personnel for later on February 24. He will call the MOD to ensure that they send an appropriate general to the session empowered to deal with the matter (MOD Hussein is actually in West Darfur at the time). He noted that the reason that JEM was able to take the towns so easily in early January was that they were lightly held by local police and native administration. JEM had attempted to reinforce its positions in Jebel Moon from Chad in the past 48 hours but had been rebuffed by the Sudanese Army. This had slightly eased the pressure on civilians trapped in the fighting because the SAF had pivoted west towards Chad rather than deeper east into Jebel Moon. He noted that the mostly Zaghawa fighters of the JEM had cynically launched this campaign over a peaceful region inhabited by Eirenga and Massalit farmers who had been largely untouched by Darfur's five years of conflict.

CIVILIANS CAUGHT IN POLITICAL AND ACTUAL CROSSFIRE

15. (C) Siddiq noted that some of the displaced had headed towards the Chadian border. These were mostly Chadians who had fled fighting in Chad in the past few years and found refuge in Sudan. CDA noted that the fighting had caused a cascading series of misplacements, describing how the inhabitants of the crossroads village of Kondobe had fled to Geneina town to avoid the fighting and then the inhabitants of the village of Bir Dagig had fled to the just vacated

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houses of Kondobe. CDA urged Siddiq to allow the fullest humanitarian access possible, as soon as possible, including by air, to the region, noting that this openness would dispel some of the wilder claims that JEM and its allies had put out on the internet of "missing children" (implying that they had been killed by the SAF) and of genocide in NW Darfur.

16. Note: UNOCHA told CDA on February 23 that the missing children story is false, there is just a lot of confusion and dislocation in the area, but admitted that "the usual bloodlust" had occurred with so far as many 20 confirmed civilian dead, considerable looting, and other crimes. A few of the dead had been killed "execution-style" in cold blood, probably by janjawid. The upshot being that there were some real atrocities but far less civilians were killed than the wild-eyed claims of JEM and some in the NGO community, but more than the GOS would admit to - there is no doubt that there are thousands of terrified, bewildered displaced people as a result of the fighting. UNOCHA feels enough food and relief has gotten through to avert the worst if provision is made for the displaced on Jebel Moon. McDonough urged that even a handful of UNAMID troops among the now SAF-controlled villages (villagers don't love the Sudanese Army but prefer it over irregular Arab militia) would calm the situation.

17. (C) Comment: This current round of fighting typifies much of the cycle of violence in Darfur in the past few years, which is substantively different than the genocide of 2003-2005: Chadian/Libyan-supported Darfur rebels take insurgent action, the SAF and its Arab militia allies respond militarily with their accustomed brutality and callousness, accusations of human rights abuses against Darfuri civilians are exchanged which are real but are politicized by both Khartoum and the rebels (each downplaying their own and exaggerating the actions of the other), the controversy then echoes internationally. The difference here is that there is, at least, an opportunity for the Sudanese to work cooperatively with the nascent UNAMID operation to stabilize the situation and provide at least a modicum of mercy to

Darfur's long-suffering civilian population. Experienced humanitarian workers in Darfur give Sudan relatively positive marks for its behavior, "given the nature of the beast," in the past few months but that is not enough given the regime's track record. This is an opportunity for them to build on that excruciatingly slow and begrudging progress or to fall back into the old habits of brutality and denial. End comment.

18. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.
FERNANDEZ